



The Renaissance of the Original Potato Chip

Saratoga Springs is home to more than horse racing, health spas and historical battlefields. In 1853, Saratoga Springs chef George Crum fried wafer-thin potatoes in response to a customer complaint of overly thick French fries, creating the world's first potato chips. The chips were an instant hit with the Moon Lake Lodge's customers, and Crum began selling the chips across the Capital region as the Moon Brand Saratoga Chips. By the 1920's, national potato chip companies dominated the marketplace through mass manufacturing and locally made Saratoga Chips faded into obscurity.

More than a century and a half later, friends Dan Jameson and Paul Tator found inspiration for their own business in the replica "take-out" box of Moon Brand Saratoga Chips during a visit to the Saratoga Springs History Museum. The pair purchased the rights to the name and box design and then painstakingly recreated Crum's original recipe with Yukon Gold potatoes, cottonseed oil and sea salt. "About this time last year, we started putting pen to paper and documenting our ideas. We kicked off our business on the Fourth of July at the museum," Dan said.

When Paul and Dan wanted assistance with developing their business plan, they turned to the Northeast SCORE Chapter for free, expert advice. "There was not a lot of conventional help for us to start this business, other than SCORE. We found them online and connected with an incredibly rich pool of talented people to assist us," recounts Dan. While working with a team of SCORE counselors to fine tune their marketing strategy and original 54-page business plan, Dan and Paul were able to leverage their counselors' expertise to become more savvy entrepreneurs. "It took 60 days to exceed their 12-month estimate and that reflects their promotional tenacity and their way of doing business," said Bill Edwards, director of the Northeast SCORE Chapter.

Currently, the chips are manufactured in southern Pennsylvania and packaged in Saratoga Springs, but the search is underway for a facility in the Saratoga area to house the entire production process. As Paul explains, the startup chip company has quickly grown since this summer from beyond regional grocery markets and specialty stores to garner national attention: "We're talking to wholesalers across the country in Texas and the Northwest. It's been driving us in directions we weren't necessarily aware of at the time. Our New York City business has come on really well, with Zabar's, Dean & DeLuca's, and other retailers now on board." Saratoga Chips have also been highlighted by national media including The New York Times, the History Channel and the Rachael Ray Show.

"At the end of the day, this is four months that we have been selling product and the response has been humbling and exciting," adds Dan. "Truly, I've never worked harder, for less, or had more fun."